6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956
"King of the dancers" — A Bida brass spinning toy.
FF52 Nupe FF52 Bida

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The guilds of craftsmen in iron, leather, and embroidery made the weapons, armour, saddle-cloths and accoutrements for the army, the agricultural workers produced food and the glass-makers produced the ornaments which formed a basis of trade when that seemed more worth while than a military operation. As is usual in a state drawing most of its profits from war and plunder, there grew in Bida a great demand for luxuries—ornamental vessels, beads and armlets, especially among the women. Many young men of Bida state, ruefully, that this taste lingers on.

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This guild system was too rigid easily to withstand fundamental changes. The blacksmiths, declining in number, now confine themselves to farm implements and a few furnishings for horsemen. The brass makers turn out a wide range of flat and hollow-ware, much of it coming loosely within the luxury classification. The embroiderers turn out fine hand work on gowns and there is a beautifully decorated, bright red cloth woven by the women; but few are sold outside the town. Makers of hats and mats turn out a range of products now largely aimed at a Europeanised market.

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This falling-off of the traditional demand and an (at least) partial failure to find adequate new markets has already resulted in the loss of some skills and is a grave risk to the perpetuation of many others.

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The glass-makers, however, still work in their traditional way. The furnace is made from a clay pot heavily embedded in more clay. Into the base of the furnace are let two clay pipes of about two inches external diameter. These swell out to become bellows chambers some twelve or fifteen inches across closed by leather bags. One pumps away at them

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